



# GCTF

GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM FORUM

**Countering Violent Extremism Working Group Brainstorming Sessions**  
**December 13-15, 2011**  
**London**

**Meeting Summary**

Experts from GCTF members and the United Nations met in London on December 13-15, 2011, for brainstorming sessions on four of the GCTF Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group work-streams: 1) CVE program assessment; 2) the role of institutions in CVE; 3) CVE communications; and 4) the CVE Center of Excellence. The outcomes of these discussions will be fed into the inaugural meeting of the CVE Working Group, which the United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the Working Group Co-Chairs (along with the UK), announced it will host in Abu Dhabi on April 3-5, 2012. Throughout the discussions it was emphasized that the Working Group, its work-streams, and the Center of Excellence should address violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations.

**Session I – CVE Program Evaluation (Chair: Canada)**

The group discussed the importance of assessment, measurement, and evaluation in all types of CVE initiatives, that is, measuring the impacts of projects, programs and policies. It was emphasized that measuring the impact of programs aimed at individuals was likely the easiest and may be a good place to start a deeper exploration.

Meeting participants agreed that measuring the outputs of CVE projects, such as number of individuals trained, is not a challenge. However, measuring the effectiveness of prevention programs posed more challenges because doing so calls for correlating the absence of an undesirable activity to project activity. There was general agreement that it would be useful to draw on evaluation practices in other domains – such as development assistance, public health, or crime prevention – where similar challenges may have already been addressed.

It was emphasized that common indicators, even common methods of evaluation, are not possible across the range of CVE programming. That said, participants

agreed that by studying this difficult subject together, GCTF members can benefit from a stronger and deeper shared understanding of possibilities, including case studies of what works and what does not. Several members offered to share their CVE evaluation experiences, both positive and negative, with all interested members.

In general, there was very strong interest in and enthusiasm for what the CVE Center of Excellence could, once established, contribute in this field.

### **Session II – Institutions in CVE (Chair: Turkey)**

GCTF members looked into the role of different institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in preventing and countering violent extremism. Participants shared summaries of their institutions' roles in CVE activities. With differing cultures, histories, and systems of government in many countries, the relative weight and exact role in CVE of any particular institution varies. Among the institutions mentioned were: education, police, intelligence, health, prisons, and religious.

Community-oriented policing and well-articulated overall programs for prevention and disengagement as well as rehabilitation and reintegration of released offenders, to include after-care, were highlighted by several GCTF members as key components for addressing the needs of our societies facing varied risks of radicalization.

Radicalization into violent extremism is a phenomenon that several GCTF members have been confronting, clothed in one ideology or another, for many years. Participants offered to share their experiences pertaining to the various roles institutions can play in countering the threat.

### **Session III – CVE through Communications (Co-Chairs: UK and United States)**

GCTF members broadly agreed on the need to be active in all forms of communications (traditional, internet, social media, and engagement through civil society). Recognizing the diversity of the terrorism challenges GCTF members face, it was emphasized that topics for exploration by the Working Group should be described in generic terms while inputs from members will be specific to their situations.

Topics discussed for submission for consideration by the CVE Working Group came under the broad headings of 1) sharing of current practices; 2) assessing communications activities by terrorist groups; and 3) studying effective uses of both traditional and new media, as well as communication around societal resilience against terrorism.

The work-stream co-leads agreed to circulate to GCTF members a working document describing further the work-stream's suggestions for the Working Group.

#### **Session IV – CVE Center of Excellence (Chair: UAE)**

The UAE delivered a detailed presentation on its vision for the Center of Excellence, building on the non-paper it prepared, which was distributed to all GCTF members in advance of the meeting.

The UAE outlined its proposed mission for the Center: “to serve as the premier international venue for training, dialogue, collaboration and research to counter violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations.” The presentation highlighted current UAE thinking regarding the end-state, purpose, values (collaboration, action, tolerance, and innovation), organizational structure, and governance of the Center. Throughout, the UAE emphasized the importance for the Center’s form to follow its function (i.e., be driven by demand) and its strong interest in receiving input from all GCTF members on what it sees to be the drivers the Center: 1) needs; 2) staffing; 3) funding and budget; 4) partners; 5) branding; 6) virtual presence; and 7) legal status.

The presentation described the planned three-phased development process for standing up the Center: 1) the concept development phase (through April 2012); 2) the implementation phase (April-September 2012); and 3) opening the Center with an initial capability (October 2012).

The UAE repeatedly emphasized the need for members to assess their own needs in terms of the Center and underscored its interest in receiving input from GCTF members on the ideas reflected in the presentation. To this end, the UAE asked GCTF members to provide their views to a structured feedback form which will be circulated to all GCTF members, as well as what they are prepared to contribute to the Center, by February 17, 2012.

GCTF members welcomed the presentation, voiced strong support for Center, and expressed appreciation for the UAE’s leadership and commitment. Several

members said they would continue to consult with their capitals as to how best they could contribute to the Center. Comments and questions focused on the legal status of the Center, the composition and functions of the steering committee, the importance of benefiting from the expertise and experiences and developing partnerships with the United Nations and relevant existing training and research centers and regional organizations. The UAE welcomed the feedback and said it looks forward to receiving additional inputs by the February 17, 2012 deadline.

It was announced that the U.S. National Defense University's Near East and South Asia Center intends to host a workshop on January 25-26, 2012, in Washington, D.C. to assist the developers of the CVE Center to gather and learn from experiences of those involved in standing up and running relevant, existing centers and other institutions. The event would convene experts from different region involved in developing and operating these institutions to share lessons learned and good practices.

### **Next Steps**

Following the meeting, the leads and co-leads of the four brainstorming sessions met informally to discuss the next steps. They agreed that although there appeared to be broad consensus among GCTF members to move forward on the four proposed work-streams, it would be important to design activities that cut across some of them and to ensure that any GCTF-branded CVE events take place only following the inaugural meeting of the Working Group in early April 2012. However, in order to help build on the momentum between now and then, they welcomed any independent initiative (where GCTF member experts could be invited to participate) aimed at making progress on one or more of the work-streams. The outcomes of such activities could be reported into the inaugural Working Group meeting.

Throughout these meetings, members discussed the need to strike the appropriate balance between making progress while avoiding a proliferation of activities and ensuring that they follow a work-plan agreed to by the Working Group.

To this end they decided to develop a list of proposed Working Group activities, which would be designed to address a number of issues highlighted during the brainstorming sessions. The list would be shared with all GCTF members for comments in advance of the inaugural meeting. When the Working Group meets in Abu Dhabi in early April 2012 it will adopt a one-year work-plan that will include a handful of GCTF CVE Working Group activities drawn from the revised list,

thus reflecting the Group's priorities for the coming year. The meeting will also include discussion on the ways in which the group should work together to achieve the balance noted above.

In addition, although not a GCTF-branded event, Canada confirmed it would host an expert colloquium in Ottawa in early 2012 to draw out lessons learned on program evaluation from academia and other policy domains. The event would be open to all GCTF members to attend.